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ABSTRACT

The broad area of teacher satisfaction is an important component in career decisions about teaching. Some sources of satisfaction are the joy of helping students learn, the sense of efficacy, positive relationships with colleagues, satisfactory working conditions, the leadership style of principals, and the prestige and esteem associated with teaching. The study described here examined such factors in relationship to teachers' work histories during the first 5 years after graduation from a teacher education program. Data for the study were taken from the fifth-year follow-up of a 10-year longitudinal study of teacher education graduates being conducted by the College of Education at Iowa State University. Subjects consisted of teacher education graduates (N=497) who had taught at some time during the 5 years since graduation. The sample was divided into two groups: continuous teachers (N=293) and noncontinuous teachers (N=204). Comparisons were made on such characteristics as academics and demographics, occupational characteristics, career orientation, job selection factors, performance, job satisfaction, and an evaluation of the teacher education program (five tables display these data). Results suggest that job satisfaction and a positive self-evaluation of teaching performance are pivotal factors that separate the continuous teachers from the noncontinuous teachers. (Two tables display the satisfaction and performance data.) (LL)

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Differences Between Teachers Who Have and Have Not Taught Continuously During the First Five Years After Graduation

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Differences between Teachers Who Have and Have Not Taught Continuously during the First Five Years after Graduation

INTRODUCTION

The retention of elementary and secondary teachers is critical to the quality of education in the United States. If we are to do a better job of recognizing which teacher education students will stay in teaching and which are likely to leave, we must determine what factors differentiate those who stay in the profession from those who do not. The purpose of this paper is to examine differences between teacher education graduates who have taught continuously since graduation and those who have taught intermittently on academic, demographic, program, job orientation, and job satisfaction variables.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The elementary and secondary school teaching profession is experiencing an imminent shortage of its members, particularly during the early years following preparation. In fact, there is evidence suggesting that there may not be a sufficient supply of teachers to staff the nation's public schools by the turn of the century (Feistritzer, 1984). Indeed, studies show that only half of those who entered teaching are still teaching five years after graduating from a teacher preparation program (Schlecty & Vance, 1981; Mark & Anderson, 1978).

The reasons that teachers decide to remain in or leave the profession have been studied extensively. Although career decisions about teaching are influenced by a complex set of issues, an important component is the broad area of teacher satisfaction. Chapman (1983b) found that while educational preparation, the initial commitment to teaching, and external influences affect the quality of the first employment experience, it is career satisfaction that influences the decision to remain in or leave teaching. He notes that "career satisfaction plays an important role in teachers' persistence in teaching, particularly as it mediates the influence of other factors on their career decisions" (p. 46).

Many factors affect teacher satisfaction and retention. Among the positive aspects are the joy of helping students learn and seeing them achieve and the enjoyment teachers receive from their relationships with their students (Hounshell & Griffin, 1989). In fact, many teachers enter the profession because of a desire to help and serve others (National Education Association, 1982).

The concept of teacher efficacy, the sense of satisfaction with one's performance as a teacher and confidence in one's ability to help children learn, is closely related. Efficacy is widely held to be important to teacher retention (Trentham, Silvern, & Brogdon, 1985; Glickman & Tamashiro, 1982; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1988). In their advice to principals on enhancing the school environment, Adams and Bailey (1989) note that a teacher's sense of efficacy is important to the education of children and should be fostered.

Relationships with other teachers is another source of satisfaction with teaching. Positive relationships with colleagues, a sense of collaboration and community among the faculty, and recognition from other teachers all have been cited as factors in a teacher's willingness to stay (Rutter & Jacobson, 1986; Chapman, 1983a; Boganschild, Lauritzen, & Metzke, 1988). On the other side of the coin, a sense of isolation in the classroom is a major source of dissatisfaction for many teachers (Chapman, 1983a; Lortie, 1975).

Working conditions also are important. New teachers find that conditions in the schools inhibit their ability to do what they most want to do--help children learn (Cresap, McCormick, & Paget, 1984; Lortie, 1975). Heavy paperwork loads and other duties that are not directly a part of the teaching process also have been cited as sources of dissatisfaction (McLaughlin, Pheifer, Swanson-Owens, & Yee, 1986).

Closely related is the importance of the leadership style of principals (Kagan, 1989; Pitner and Charters, 1988). Many cite the administrative support that teachers receive from their principals as an important ingredient in teacher retention (Boganschild, Lauritzen, & Metzke, 1988; Adams and Bailey, 1989, Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1988). Adams and Bailey (1989) note the leadership of the principal affects how teachers feel about themselves.

Finally, teachers' perceptions of the esteem in which teaching is held is important to retention. In their study of science teachers who left teaching, Hounshell and Griffin (1989) found that a lack of prestige and respect for the profession from parents, community, and the general public influenced teachers' decisions to leave. Boganschild, Lauritzen, and Metzke (1988) concluded that community support and parental respect are among the factors contributing to teacher attrition. Friesen, Prokop, and Sarras (1988) found satisfaction with status and recognition to be one of the factors influencing teacher burnout.

In sum, the complex of factors related to teacher retention include teacher satisfaction, a positive view of one's performance as a teacher, the ability and opportunity to help students learn, working conditions, and the prestige and status associated with teaching. The present study examines such factors in relationship to teachers' work histories during the first five years after graduation from a teacher preparation program.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were taken from the fifth-year follow-up of the longitudinal study of teacher education graduates being conducted by the College of Education at Iowa State University. In this ten-year-long study, graduates are surveyed as they enter the teacher education program, as they graduate, and one year, five years, and ten years after graduation. The fifth-year followup data analyzed in this paper were collected in 1987, 1988, and 1989.

The sample consisted of 497 teacher education graduates who had taught at some time during the five years since they graduated. It was divided into two groups: continuous teachers and non-continuous teachers. Over half of the sample were continuous teachers (N=293) who entered the teaching profession upon graduation or after their first or second year out and have continued to teach. The non-continuous teachers (N=204) were made up of two groups: those who taught and then left the profession and those who taught intermittently. (Those who had never taught during the five year period were excluded from the analysis.)

Continuous teachers were compared with non-continuous on such general characteristics as academics and demographics, occupational characteristics, career orientation, job selection factors, performance, job satisfaction, and perceptions of the adequacy and importance of various areas of preparation in the teacher education program.

RESULTS

Comparisons of continuous teachers and non-continuous teachers on general characteristics. When compared on various academic characteristics (Table 1), there was one significant difference between continuous and non-continuous teachers; ACT scores were significantly higher for non-continuous teachers. The respondents who have taught continuously following graduation tended to rate their general satisfaction with their most recent job somewhat higher than those not teaching continuously; they also rated the quality of the teacher education program slightly higher. Neither difference was statistically significant.

As shown in Table 2, chi-square results indicate a significant difference in teaching certification level between the two groups; a significantly higher percentage of graduates who were certified at the K-6 level were teaching continuously, and a higher proportion of graduates who were certified at the 7-12 level were teaching non-continuously.

A significant difference between the continuous and non-continuous teachers in terms of the size of the communities in which they were currently employed is also evident. While 56 percent of the non-continuous teachers were employed in more highly populated areas (25,000 or more), only 36 percent of the continuous teachers were employed in communities over 25,000. At the other end of the scale, 27 percent of the continuous teachers and 18 percent of the non-continuous teachers were in the two lowest population classifications (less than 2,500).

The family incomes of the two groups differed significantly. A higher percentage of the non-continuous teachers reported that they earned less than $10,000 the year after graduation, while a higher percentage of the continuous teachers reported that they

TABLE 1
Continuous Teachers Versus Non-Continuous Teachers -- Academic, Job and Program Variables

CHARACTERISTIC/GROUPING	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS MEAN	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS MEAN	T VALUE
Grade point average at admission to Teacher Education	293	2.89	204	2.92	-0.83
College graduating grade point average	293	3.10	204	3.09	0.26
High school rank	244	22.17	165	20.99	0.73
ACT	229	21.21	160	22.08	-2.00*
General satisfaction with current job[a]	282	7.55	203	7.34	1.23
Program rating[a]	290	7.06	197	6.79	1.67

* Significant difference at .05 level.
a The rating scale for these items was 0 through 10 with 0=very low and 10=very high.

earned between $10,000 and $20,000. Similar percentages of the two groups earned incomes of $20,000 or more.

There was also a significant difference in the responses of the two groups to the question, "If you had it to do over, would you prepare to become a teacher?" Sixty-seven percent of the continuous teachers and 52 percent of the non-continuous teachers responded affirmatively.

TABLE 2

Continuous Teachers Versus Non-Continuous Teachers -- Demographic Characteristics

CHARACTERISTIC/GROUPING	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS PERCENT	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS PERCENT	TOTAL N	TOTAL PERCENT
GENDER						
Female	233	79.5	169	82.8	402	80.9
Male	60	20.5	35	17.2	95	19.1
TOTAL	293	100.0	204	100.0	497	100.0
Chi-Square = 0.66 Significance = 0.42						
COLLEGE						
Agriculture	21	7.2	21	10.3	42	8.5
Design	6	2.0	4	2.0	10	2.0
Education	173	59.0	98	48.0	271	54.5
Family and Consumer Sciences	62	21.2	47	23.0	109	21.9
Science & Humanities	31	10.6	34	16.7	65	13.1
TOTAL	293	100.0	204	100.0	497	100.0
Chi-Square = 7.67 Significance = 0.10						
TEACHING CERTIFICATION LEVEL						
Prekindergarten/ Kindergarten	37	12.6	21	10.3	58	11.7
Elementary	137	46.8	73	35.8	210	42.3
Secondary	100	34.1	86	42.2	186	37.4
K-12	19	6.5	24	11.8	43	8.7
TOTAL	293	100.0	204	100.0	497	100.0
Chi-Square = 9.93 Significance = 0.02						

TABLE 2 (Continued)

CHARACTERISTIC/GROUPING	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS PERCENT	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS PERCENT	TOTAL N	TOTAL PERCENT
POPULATION OF COMMUNITY WHERE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED						
Under 1,000	33	11.5	17	8.6	50	10.3
1,000 - 2,499	44	15.3	18	9.1	62	12.8
2,500 - 4,999	32	11.1	10	5.1	42	8.6
5,000 - 9,999	40	13.9	15	7.6	55	11.3
10,000 - 24,999	36	12.5	28	14.1	64	13.2
25,000 - 50,000	28	9.7	29	14.6	57	11.7
Over 50,000	75	26.0	81	40.9	156	32.1
TOTAL	288	100.0	198	100.0	486	100.0
Chi-Square = 24.33 Significance = 0.00						
11 missing observations						
INCOME						
Less than $10,000	2	0.7	12	6.2	14	2.9
$10,000 - $19,999	76	26.9	40	20.5	116	24.3
$20,000 - $29,999	82	29.0	56	28.7	138	28.9
$30,000 - $49,999	86	30.4	61	31.3	147	30.8
$50,000 and over	37	13.1	26	13.3	63	13.2
TOTAL	283	100.0	195	100.0	478	100.0
Chi-Square = 21.95 Significance = 0.00						
19 missing observations						
DO OVER AGAIN						
Yes	193	67.0	105	51.7	298	60.7
No	37	12.8	42	20.7	79	16.1
Undecided	58	20.1	56	27.6	114	23.2
TOTAL	288	100.0	203	100.0	491	100.0
Chi-Square = 11.98 Significance = 0.00						
6 missing observations						

Comparisons of continuous teachers and non-continuous teachers on preparation areas. The continuous teachers and non-continuous teachers were compared on their ratings of the adequacy and importance of their preparation in seven areas (Table 3). No significant differences were found on ratings of adequacy of the program. However, in terms of importance ratings, the continuous teachers rated the following four areas as significantly more important than did the non-continuous teachers: planning and delivering instruction, assessing and dealing with children's learning problems, using techniques for infusing multicultural learning, and developing a teaching style. Non-continuous teachers did not rate any areas as significantly more important. Given that the majority of the non-continuous teachers are working in non-education settings, it seems reasonable that these areas of preparation would be less important for them than for the teachers who use these skills daily in the classroom.

Comparisons of continuous teachers and non-continuous teachers on occupational characteristics. The ratings of career orientation of continuous teachers and non-continuous teachers are reported in Table 4. Only one difference was significant: respondents who have been teaching continuously noted that their occupations provided significantly more opportunities for humanity and service (opportunities to help and serve others, effect social change, and work with people rather than things).

With respect to job selection factors, there were two significant differences between the two groups (Table 5). The continuous teachers rated the size of the organization as a significantly more important factor than did the non-continuous teachers. The non-continuous teachers rated liking the interviewer as significantly more important than did the continuous teachers.

TABLE 3

Continuous Teachers Versus Non-Continuous Teachers Comparison of Adequacy and Importance Ratings -- 1987-1989

AREA/RATING	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS MEAN	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS MEAN	T VALUE
Planning and delivering instruction					
Adequacy[a]	291	3.60	198	3.59	0.24
Importance[b]	287	4.22	193	4.11	2.06*
Interpersonal relationships and individual differences					
Adequacy	291	3.25	198	3.20	0.73
Importance	287	4.07	193	3.97	1.93
Assessing and dealing with learning problems					
Adequacy	290	2.99	198	2.97	0.13
Importance	284	4.06	167	3.87	2.52*
Testing and evaluating students					
Adequacy	291	3.48	198	3.51	-0.36
Importance	284	3.86	175	3.73	1.71
Developing a teaching style					
Adequacy	291	3.34	198	3.40	-0.94
Importance	287	4.20	190	4.08	2.50*
Preparing and using instructional media and equipment					
Adequacy	289	3.92	198	3.98	-0.80
Importance	284	3.81	186	3.67	1.63
Techniques for infusing multicultural learning					
Adequacy	288	3.92	195	3.79	1.44
Importance	273	3.58	158	3.28	2.63**

* Significant difference at .05 level.

** Significant difference at .01 level.

a Rating scale for adequacy: very adequate=5, adequate=4, neutral=3, inadequate=2, very inadequate=1.

b Rating scale for importance: very important=5, important=4, neutral=3, unimportant=2, very unimportant=1.

TABLE 4

Continuous Teachers Versus Non-Continuous Teachers -- Career Orientation

COMPOSITE	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	T VALUE
Challenge/leadership	291	3.85	202	3.88	-0.54
Extrinsic rewards	291	3.01	201	3.11	-1.38
Empowerment	291	4.08	202	4.06	0.26
Humanity/service	291	4.14	201	3.96	3.13**

a Rating scale for this item: all of the time=5, most of the time=4, some of the time=3, seldom=2, and never=1.

** Significant difference at .01 level.

TABLE 5

Continuous Teachers Versus Non-Continuous Teachers -- Job Selection Factors

CHARACTERISTIC	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	T VALUE
Desirable location	289	4.09	197	4.06	0.34
Salary offered	287	3.41	192	3.37	0.46
Type of position	289	4.19	199	4.22	-0.35
Size of organization	287	3.30	191	3.06	2.34*
Reputation of school, firm or organization	285	3.60	189	3.63	-0.35
Liked interviewer	281	3.65	190	3.87	-2.23*
Spouse has job in the community	173	4.03	126	4.14	-0.84
Only job offered	140	3.46	76	3.24	1.16

a Rating scale for importance: very important=5, important=4, neutral=3, unimportant=2, very unimportant=1. Not applicable and no answer were not included in the calculation of the mean.

* Significant difference at .05 level.

Comparisons of continuous teachers and non-continuous teachers on satisfaction and performance. Continuous and non-continuous teachers differed significantly on ratings of their own performance in all four areas examined, as shown in Table 6. Specifically, continuous teachers rated their performance in the learning environment, teaching environment, managing instructional activities, and maintaining work relationships significantly higher than did teachers who had not taught continuously.

When these respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with several aspects of teaching, continuous teachers indicated significantly higher satisfaction in several areas (Table 7). They tended to be more satisfied with their jobs, as also was indicated on Table 1. They reported higher satisfaction with their own level of job performance, consistent with the results presented in Table 6. In addition, they were significantly more satisfied with the communities in which they were working and with their roles in professional organizations. Overall, they reported greater satisfaction with teaching as a career.

The continuous teachers also rated themselves as more satisfied with all other areas about which they were asked, although the differences were not significant. These areas included satisfaction with the method and frequency of job evaluation, their relationships with other teachers, support from their families, and the amount of time spent working.

TABLE 6

Continuous Teachers Versus Non-Continuous Teachers -- Performance

CHARACTERISTIC	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	T-VALUE
Learning environment performance	284	8.38	183	8.10	2.92**
Teaching environment performance	284	8.24	183	7.90	3.61**
Managing instructional activities	284	7.90	181	7.61	1.96*
Maintaining work relationships	284	8.57	183	8.26	2.06*

[a] Rating scale for performance ranged from 0 to 10, with 0=very low and 10=very high.

* Significant difference at .05 level.

** Significant difference at .01 level.

TABLE 7

Continuous Teachers Versus Non-Continuous Teachers -- Satisfaction

CHARACTERISTIC	CONTINUOUS N	CONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	NONCONTINUOUS N	NONCONTINUOUS MEAN[a]	T-VALUE
Satisfaction with job	286	3.52	187	3.34	2.72**
Satisfaction with community	286	3.75	187	3.57	2.77**
Satisfaction with evaluation	278	3.31	180	3.25	0.67
Relationship with other teachers	286	4.26	186	4.14	1.64
Level of job performance	283	4.19	185	4.03	2.23*
Support from family	285	4.20	186	4.05	1.58
Amount of time spent working	285	3.27	185	3.24	0.33
Role in professional associations	276	3.48	174	3.25	2.54*
Teaching as a career	286	3.95	187	3.45	5.05**

[a] Rating scale for satisfaction: very satisfied=5, satisfied=4, neutral=3, dissatisfied=2, very dissatisfied=1.

* Significant difference at .05 level.

** Significant difference at .01 level.

CONCLUSIONS

While the data indicate that continuous teachers are different from non-continuous teachers on several measures, the most striking differences are in their perceptions of their own job performance and in their satisfaction with teaching. They rated their teaching performance higher than did non-continuous teachers, and they reported a significantly higher level of satisfaction with their job performance.

A higher level of satisfaction with a number of aspects of teaching was indicated by the continuous teachers. They rated their satisfaction with their most recent job higher than did non-continuous teachers. They were significantly more likely to say they would choose to become teachers again if they had it to do over again. They were significantly more likely to report having the opportunity to use special abilities. And they indicated a higher level of satisfaction with all of the specific aspects of teaching about which they were asked--in many cases, significantly so.

While many factors that are not job-related undoubtedly come into play in the professional status of teacher education graduates, these data indicate that during the first five years after graduation, characteristics of the teaching profession and positive perceptions of one's own professional abilities are related to continuous teaching. In this analysis, job satisfaction and positive self-evaluations of teaching performance appear to be the pivotal factors that separate the continuous teachers from the non-continuous teachers.

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